

work on important legislation to finally help America end its dependence on foreign oil and pursue newer, cleaner forms of energy.

I'm excited that the Energy and Water appropriations bill that we will pass this week will take the long overdue step of setting a new course for our energy future by making significant investments in renewables and efficiency.

For too many years, working families have felt the sting of high gas prices at the gas pump and rising home energy costs. Our economy has been made vulnerable to the whims of OPEC, and our reliance on fossil fuels has polluted our air and exacerbated climate change.

All the while, State and local governments have been forced to try to fill the leadership vacuum left by the Congress and this President.

No more. The new Congress is prepared to meet our Nation's energy challenges head-on, and to do so, this bill provides almost \$2 billion for renewables and efficiency, significantly more than the President requested.

I am concerned that it continues to provide unwarranted taxpayer subsidies for nuclear power that hide the true consumer costs of this power source, but I support this bill, and I urge my colleagues to ratify it.

AMERICANS ARE MORE THAN QUALIFIED TO BREAK THEIR ADDICTION TO OIL

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I read in the Charlotte Observer about a gentleman who decided to retrofit his 1981 diesel Mercedes with vegetable oil and got a knock on his door by the tax man. His crime was choosing to take a stand against the rising cost of gasoline, OPEC, and other international energy cartels by converting his car into clean-running alternative energy. His punishment was a \$1,000 fine by the North Carolina State Government and \$1,000 notice from the Feds. So much for innovation and alternative fuel research.

The predicament was chronicled in the Charlotte Observer on June 15, and what we're finding out is he's not alone. Many innovators around the country are creating unique ways to exercise energy independence. In so doing, they're demonstrating to the Federal Government that the American people are more than qualified to break their addiction to foreign oil. Good old American ingenuity always comes through.

As we take up consideration on the Energy Approps Act for 2008, it's instructive to consider what they know. If you want to get more innovation, incentivize it. If you want less of it, tax it.

TAKING CARE OF OUR VETERANS

(Mr. CARNAHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARNAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I stand to honor our Nation's veterans and one special veteran. Today, we mourn the passing of Jeff Smart, a Vietnam veteran, constituent and friend. Not only was Jeff a tireless advocate for veterans rights, he was a valuable member of my Veterans Advisory Committee in Missouri.

I know that Jeff would be proud to know that last week the House came together in a bipartisan way to pass the 2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill that contained a historic increase in the VA budget. This bill included the largest single funding increase in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration.

This funding increase ensures that our veterans are given the support, benefits and resources they need and deserve. I applaud this Congress's commitment to countless veterans like Jeff Smart who will always inspire us in the years to come.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JERRY BAKER, AMERICA'S MASTER GARDENER

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute Jerry Baker, America's master gardener, as he celebrates his birthday. As a former owner of a nursery business, I've come to appreciate the wit and wisdom that Jerry has given to gardeners across the country for more than three decades.

Jerry has been offering tips for almost as long as I can remember. His folksy and down-to-earth advice has been helping everyone from city dwellers trying to master a finicky herb garden in a window box to longtime gardeners across rural America who produce those ubiquitous wheelbarrows full of zucchini.

Thanks to Jerry, our gardens have been producing more with less. Today, with dozens of books full of garden advice in print and a weekly nationwide radio show where he solves the gardening problems of people across the country, Jerry is well-established as America's go-to guy on all things gardening.

As he marks one more year on his calendar, I rise to wish him many more years of garden mastering. Happy birthday, Jerry.

PRESIDENT BLOCKING THE DEMOCRATIC NEW DIRECTION AGENDA

(Mr. PERLMUTTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, the new Democratic-led House has been lis-

tening to the American people and working to take our Nation in a new direction. We've passed a wide range of measures to strengthen our military, grow our economy and support working families, many with bipartisan support.

For example, so far this year, we've passed legislation implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations, approved a budget that achieves a balance in 5 years, passed sweeping congressional ethics reform, repealed big oil subsidies, invested funds in renewable energy and increased the minimum wage.

But the President continues his stubborn opposition to this new direction that we are providing on Iraq and on key domestic measures. He does not support or has threatened to veto about two-thirds of the important work we've already provided.

Mr. Speaker, our priorities are America's priorities. It's time the President stops obstructing our agenda and begins working with us to improve the lives of all Americans.

PROTECTING OUR KIDS FROM CONTAMINATED PRODUCTS

(Mr. KIRK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Consumer Product Safety Commission and toy company RC2 announced a recall of 1.5 million Thomas & Friends railway toys because they might contain dangerous amounts of lead.

Lead poisoning causes vomiting and diarrhea, convulsions, anemia, a loss of appetite, abdominal pain, irritability, fatigue and coma. It can even be fatal.

The toys were made in China and were retailed throughout the United States. First, it was pet food, then toothpaste, now Thomas the Tank Engine. Just about every family with kids in my district has a Thomas the Tank Engine.

We need to send a clear notice to importers that goods that threaten the safety of kids should be left on America's docks.

That's why I'm introducing legislation this week that prohibits the importation of any product from an importer of processed food or retail goods that the Secretary of Health and Human Services has determined contains unsafe levels of contaminants.

Mr. Speaker, we need to do this to defend America's families, especially its children.

DIFFERENT PRIORITIES ON FEDERAL SPENDING

(Mr. ALTMIRE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, President Bush said this week that there are important differences between Republicans and Democrats when it comes to